

The Reading Assessment

The NAEP reading assessment measures students’ ability to understand, to interpret, and to think critically about different types of texts. Recognizing that readers vary their approach according to the demands of different types of text, the NAEP framework specifies the assessment of reading in two distinct types of text — literary and informational text. The assessment includes reading materials selected from publications and other resources typically available to students in and out of school.

The framework for the 2009 NAEP Reading Assessment replaces a framework that was first developed for the 1992 assessment. The 2009 framework honors many aspects of the previous framework but also introduces some changes that can lead to better measurement and more precise reporting of assessment results. Changes featured in the 2009 NAEP Reading Framework include

- an assessment design based on current scientific reading research,
- consistency with the No Child Left Behind legislation,
- use of international reading assessments to inform the NAEP Framework,
- a more focused measurement of vocabulary,
- measurements of reading behaviors (cognitive targets) in a more objective manner, and
- distinction of cognitive targets relevant to literary and informational text.

The NAEP reading assessment contains multiple-choice questions, as well as short and extended constructed-response questions. Students spend approximately 50 to 60 percent of their assessment time providing written answers to constructed-response questions. For more information regarding the reading assessment framework, please visit <http://www.nagb.org>.

NAEP Reading Framework
Distribution of Question Pool Across Reading Contexts

	Grade 12
Literary Text	30%
Informational Text	70%

Reading Booklet Directions

In each of the next two sections, you will have 25 minutes to read one or two passages and to answer questions about what you have read.

You will be asked to respond to two types of questions. The first type of question requires you to choose the best answer and fill in the oval for that answer in your booklet. Some questions of this type will ask you about the meaning of a word as it is used in the passage.

The other type of question requires you to write your answer on the blank lines in your booklet. Some questions of this type will ask you to write a short answer and some questions will ask you to write a longer answer.

Here is an example of a question that requires you to write a short answer.

Do you think "Summer Adventure" was a good title for the story? Explain why or why not using details from the story.

I think "Summer Adventure" was a good title for the story because the main character, Joe, got to go on a trip to Alaska where he saw Mt. McKinley.

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Here is an example of a question that requires you to write a longer, more detailed answer.

Joe has different feelings during his trip in Alaska. Describe two different feelings Joe had and explain what caused him to have those feelings.

Joe was lonely when he first arrived in Alaska because he was missing his friends back home, but then he met Jerry and Pat and felt better.

When Jerry's parents took them all to Portage Lake, Joe felt excited because they went on a boat ride across a lake filled with icebergs to see the blue glaciers.

Think carefully about each question. When you are writing your response, make your answer as complete as possible. Be sure your handwriting is clear. Use as many lines as you need.

You may go back to the passage when answering the questions.

If you finish before time is called, read over your work to be sure you have provided your best answer.



Sample Reading Questions

Grade 12

Days of Oaks, Years of Salt

LUCIENNE S. BLOCH

My grandmother walked most of the way from a little town near Graz, in Austria, to London. She was twenty, green-limbed and raw, and so was this century: both of them restless, unshackled, upheaved from an ancient order of things into a world whose recent peace was more tentative than convincing.

Of course she did not walk alone; there were, still, vestigial proprieties in operation. Her brother, senior by a couple of significant years, accompanied her: two dark-eyed travelers seeking roomier futures than the ones they stood to inherit at home. Leaving behind three younger sisters and a widowed mother, they strolled toward the possibilities that an uncle, well settled in a woolens business in London, might provide. They carried everything on their backs, food and shoes and such, the goodbyes. At night they slept in fields, in barns when the weather turned. They picked up crumbs of new languages, mouthfuls to get by on. There is no record of this legendary journey apart from the remembered and recounted one; no documentary diaries, no franked passports, no railway or steamship ticket stubs, no hotel bills, no souvenir photographs or trinkets, no many-creased maps. Did it happen, as told? I believe so. I always believed so, although I knew the reports had been altered by the time they reached me, embroidered, translated, aggrandized, I supposed. Even so, I swallowed them whole, lured and hooked like a trout by a glitteringly fabulous fly. The adventure of it!

Taking a southerly route—longer, warmer, certainly more picturesque—my grandmother and her brother climbed into Italy through the Carnic Alps where frontiers weren't as strict as they could have been. They walked across the top of Italy, each step lighter than the one before it, springier, down to Genoa, where they followed the seductive curve of the Riviera to Marseilles, then made their way across the bottom of France to Bordeaux to board a ship for the final leg of their leisurely journey.

Upon seeing the Mediterranean and its shores for the first time, my grandmother was so amazed she took to singing, in the streets particularly. She didn't sing for money; they had all the cash they needed wrapped in handkerchiefs in their rucksacks. She sang for the pure joy of adding her note to those that hovered, purling and trilling, in the pellucid sea air. Making a musical offering to gods whose existence she hadn't even suspected, she sang folk songs in the dialect of her girlhood. Her voice, small, untrained, may have

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moved a heart or two. In Antibes, singing on a boulevard planted with flowering laurels, she was sketched by a man sitting on the terrace of a cafe. It could have been Matisse, we like to think; the dates and place are right. The man showed her the sketch but he did not give it to her.

My grandmother arrived in London about seven months after she commenced walking. Her cheeks were flushed, tomato-red, despite the rough Channel crossing. Long ropy muscles snaked down her legs to her narrow feet. Between them, she and her brother had gone through five pairs of what they claimed were sturdy boots, and through something less tangible, not measurable in distance covered or time elapsed. “Why did you walk? Why didn’t you go on trains?” I asked her once when I was nine or so and liked the mechanics of events to be fleshed out so I could grasp them more tightly.

“I was too beauty for men in irons,” she answered. “Only stars could have my shining.” She was said to be ‘somewhat’ senile, a vague qualifier for an already vague condition. But I could usually catch the drift of her scattered words. She caught my more regular ones. We understood each other.

Soon after reaching London, my grandmother made what must be seen as a brilliant match, acquiescing to arrangements set in motion by her uncle prior to her arrival. Was this match to her liking? Did her likings matter? These are conjectures. The fact appears to be that a future was perceived and undertaken by a woman whose legs may have been stronger than her spirit and whose song, it is possible, was silenced. I know what she told me, repeatedly.

“I was my dream under a lock of petals,” she used to say, pointing to her wedding portrait in the snapshot album we looked at together week after week on the Saturday afternoons of my childhood; pictures were the safety net for what fell from her memory’s difficult trapeze act. “Seven times I swanned around my stranger, then the glass broke awake to weeping. Salt in the mouth was my sadness to come.”

Sadness? Was that the destination of her high adventure or only a stopping place, a marriage’s way station?

There was no sadness in my grandmother when I saw her weekly. Or else I was too young to recognize what I saw, a fadedness of sorts, but one I felt was due to a lack of color rather than of cheer. The three rooms of her apartment were done in a variety of whites. Alabaster, ivory, off-white, cream-white, and eggshell puddled into custards on the walls and upholstery, at the silk-swagged windows, on the painted tables and bureaus and kitchen cupboards. Even the rugs on the floors were pallid, washed over the years into what was no more than a thin reminder of beiges and blues. She was blanched too: snowy hair, chalky powdered face, starched white lace and linen blouses, pearly teeth she constantly took out of her soft oystery mouth to amuse me, herself also. She’d hand me the wet dentures and say something like, “Jewels to be is on the tongue. Try me on.” We laughed and laughed as I tried to clamp her false teeth

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between my lips like Halloween vampire fangs. All that whiteness she lived in wasn't cold, wasn't bleak; it didn't chill our times together. We played cards. We baked cupcakes. We knitted wispy mohair mufflers for the entire family. We studied the single photo album she brought to this country, and she told me stories prompted by the pictures. "In the days of oaks," she'd begin; that was her habitual opening phrase.

In my own days of oaks, Granny, there were questions I might have asked you but didn't think of then. One, especially one question haunts me now, about the one photograph you kept on your bedside table to look at all the time, not just once a week when I came to visit you and we pored over the album for clues to remembering. The photograph I want to know about, the one you didn't hide between the tooled leather covers of a book that was further hidden in a drawer between layers of your silky white underwear, is of a person you seldom mentioned to me, a man I never knew because he died in the blitz before I was born.

My grandfather struts on a seaside esplanade, straw-hatted, wearing a snappy striped blazer. His stance is jaunty. He looks extremely pleased, although there isn't a smile below his mustache. His chin points toward his left shoulder, a birdlike tilt of the head. One hand grips a silver-headed walking stick, the other is tucked into the pocket of his white flannel pants. He is a tall slim man casting a sharp pencil-slim shadow on the paved promenade. At a distance behind him, behind a wrought-iron railing, a pier stretches across the pebbled beach and stilts into the sea. There is some kind of pavilion at the end of the pier above the water, a roofed but open-sided structure. It could have been Brighton, in August perhaps. The picture must have been taken very early in the morning, given the look and angle of his shadow. There aren't any other people in the picture, no other strollers on the broad esplanade, no children squatting at the sea's curly edge. Even in the old and faded photograph, the summer morning light is so splendid and immense it fills the image and its subject with bright importance.

What I want to know is this, Granny: Where were you? Why aren't you on his arm as in all the other vacation snaps in the album, smiling at the photographer approaching and inviting you both to pose, please? What was it about this picture you're not in that made you keep it out? Did it remind you of something you wouldn't talk about even when I asked you the questions I could then? Was that your salty sadness: his self-importance? Did he shine so sharply, absolutely, right in your eyes, dazzling you into arranging for a conspicuous absence of yourself, paling your intense promising colors until they were out of season for you? Did he white you out even then?

Dying, my grandmother's determination was vivid again; her courage as fresh as young grass. I hadn't ever seen her so lofty, almost imperious; death was a dirty penny she wouldn't stoop for. I was summoned from college

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to her sickroom, at home, to collect what she insisted on passing to me in person, making a physical gesture that resonated far louder and clearer than any testamental paper bell could. We had already said some of our farewells a month earlier when I was home on Christmas break, but certain matters had to be postponed until the last possible minute. She was in bed dozing, waiting for me, face powdered and cheeks rouged as though for a pleasanter outing. My kiss woke her. I couldn't see the sickness below her skin, the sly cells chewing through bone, excavating an insidious one-way tunnel. She still looked intact to me; only her dark eyes were worn, sunk deep in their sockets like eight balls dropping for end shots. I plumped up her pillows, propped her to a sitting position, and sat down on the edge of her bed. My mother left the room to take a nap, make some coffee or calls, go for a walk, get away from her mother-in-law's deathbed for the short time I was there to spell her.

"Eyes, darling eyes," my grandmother greeted me, "don't water me now, I'm for drying. Don't fear such dust. I'm keeping. I'm keeping in the eyes of your time."

I wasn't afraid, but I was crying.

She opened the drawer of her night table, took out a handful of jewelry, almost flung it in my lap, dismissing it disdainfully, such absurd little things: two gold necklaces, a diamond-studded wrist-watch, a string of yellowed pearls, two rings that will never fit my thicker fingers. I thanked her. "Bauble me not!" she commanded.

Then we got down to business. She reached into the drawer for the snapshot album we passed so many afternoons with and presented it to me delicately, reverently, her thin arm floating like a ballet dancer's toward a partner, her proud head nodding up and down: yes, yes. I moved to her side, leaned back on the pillows with her, our knees bent up to form a book rest. Then we did what we'd always done, turned the pages one by one. Only this time we did it in silence because, she said, "the words cooked away before me."

Slowly, slowly, we turned the pages until she fell asleep. I sat in a chair by her bed for a while, holding my album, listening to her breathe, listening for the small song her bones, hollowed by disease, were whistling again.

WO000909

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WO000916

1. Explain the narrator's feelings about the grandmother.

WO000910

2. What was the grandmother seeking in going to London, and did she find it? Support your answer using information from the story.

WO000911

3. Soon after the grandmother arrived in London, her uncle persuaded her to

- ☐ Ⓐ emigrate to the United States
- ☒ Ⓑ marry someone he had chosen
- ☐ Ⓒ become a professional singer
- ☐ Ⓓ work as an artist's model



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WO000912

4. Explain what you think the grandmother was trying to communicate to the narrator by the gift of the photo album.

WO000919

5. How does the description of the grandmother’s apartment contribute to an understanding of her life?

